

California Avocado Menu Promotions Continue to Drive Seasonal Usage of the Fruit

The California Avocado Commission (CAC) partners with targeted foodservice chains to develop customized California avocado menu items, support materials and promotions to increase the purchase of California avocados in season.

The foodservice chain promotions also play a critical role in the Commission's efforts to increase awareness of fresh California avocados, provide more opportunities for consumers to enjoy fresh California avocados when dining out and inspire them to incorporate the fruit in meals and snacks at home. In fact, in 2015 the Commission's foodservice chain promotions resulted in a 39 percent increase in fresh California avocado usage at participating restaurants. Overall, the foodservice industry is experiencing a surge in avocado inclusion on menus. According to the 2015 Datassential Menu Trends report, avocado penetration has increased 48 percent among total U.S. restaurants

since 2005. During that same time span, avocado menu incidence has risen by 58 percent leading to a 134 percent increase in avocado menu mentions.

In an effort to encourage foodservice chains to showcase California avocados in limited-time-offers (LTOs) on the menu, the Commission's foodservice team works closely with the chains' culinary R&D, marketing and purchasing personnel on menu ideation and customized promotions. In particular, CAC reinforces the "local" and California-grown positions as differentiators the chains can leverage by prominently displaying the California avocado logo. As Jim Cottle, manager of Food and Beverage/R&D of Marie Callender's noted, "We use fresh California avocados for the color and flavor. California avocados are synonymous with California and are considered a 'premium ingredient' when used on salads, tacos, entrees, etc."

Marie Callender's has partnered with the Commission this season to offer seasonal California avocado promotions. All 65 Marie Callender's locations showcased a "Southwest Flavor Fest" from April 1 through June 23. The promotion consisted of five LTO menu items featuring the fresh fruit:

Kickin' Chicken Salad, Carnitas Philly Melt, Southwest Chicken Enchiladas, Ultimate Southwest Combo and Pulled Pork Street Tacos. Other promotions are being planned and implemented throughout the fresh California avocado season.

Each of the foodservice chain partners utilizes a variety of point-of-sale (POS) pieces such as tray liners, table tents, cash register wraps, menu boards, T-stands, posters and free-standing insert coupons to drive awareness of the seasonal campaigns. In addition, the chains promote the LTO menu items with cable network tags, e-blasts to club members, website callouts and social media posts on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram.

The new California avocado logo is featured prominently on both POS materials and the digital platforms to reinforce the local and premium messaging that helps the foodservice chains differentiate their menus from the competition.

“At Rubio’s, we use fresh California Hass avocados in our handmade guacamole and in dishes throughout our menu, whenever possible,” adds Ralph Rubio, co-founder of Rubio’s Coastal Grill. “Our food quality comes from being selective, and we source fresh California Hass avocados seasonally because of their delicious, rich flavor and creamy texture.”

The Rubio’s promotion, which ran from March 30 to May 31, featured a *California Bowl with Guacamole* and a *Chipotle Orange Salad with Fresh California Avocado Slices* in 193 units.



The Rubio’s table tent informs customers that the avocados they are enjoying are “grown on small family farms in California.”



Ruby’s Diner featured a Food Network tag in the Los Angeles cable market that showcased fresh slices of California avocado on a Cobb Burger.

Ruby’s Diner launched the California avocado season on February 15 with an “It’s a Wrap” promotion. Twenty-nine locations featured California avocados on the *Cobb Burger*, *Turkey Cobb Wrap* and *Crispy Baja Fish Wrap*.



The new California avocado logo is featured on El Pollo Loco's "Signature Avocado Tostadas" free standing insert.

El Pollo Loco also celebrated the early California avocado season. From March 12 to April 22, 436 locations ran a "Signature Avocado Tostadas" promotion that included *Chicken and Shrimp Avocado*, *Southwest Chicken Avocado*, *Chicken Mango Avocado* and *Ultimate Double Chicken* tostadas.

The Egg & I's "Spring Fresh: New Season. New Flavors." LTO menu provided customers with the opportunity to begin their day with *California Avocado Toast*. One-hundred-sixteen locations featured the breakfast item from March 28 to May 29.



La Salsa's Grilled Wahoo and Baja-style Shrimp Taco menu boards were placed in 40 locations.



The Baja Fresh/La Salsa foodservice chain combined fresh California avocados with seafood for their "Seafood Combo" and "Taste the Flavors of Baja Mexico" LTO promotions. In addition to the *Seafood Taco*, *Baja Grilled Wahoo Taco* and *Baja-style Shrimp Taco*, customers can enjoy fresh guacamole with every item on the menu. The LTO menu items will be available to customers through August. 🥑